I have written all this, that you may be the better able to answer the inquiry made. I also that you may know. what our my aims & views as a preacher. It is not very pleasant to me, to be making such inquiries as these, nor to do any thing of this sort. but as I have come

Paid 12½

Rev. Amos A. Phelps

Boston

Mass.



near a crisis that is considerably important to myself & friends I wish to be informed of all that I need to know. You will not make any further communication of what is contained in this - than you shall deem advisable. In haste - Yrs Truly A. Porter

You will understand that I do not wish you to make a display by inquiry to the Prudential Committee

effect upon the audience, in lengthening & shortening. this or that part. in adjusting the description, explanation, argument & appeal. I can not of course judge of my success or acceptance with which I preach. I can only say in regard to the mechanical part of the thing - the speaking. that this I can do as readily as I can read from notes, & with no discernible hesitancy. when I have once become accustomed to the house & the congregation.

When I write a sermon, I do it because the subject interests me & I write not so much with reference to the actual effect in delivery as the development of the subject. & yet as I suppose it is rather a rough a man not to preach written sermons. & as I might betray the secret by hesitating in a strange place. I have usually preached from notes when absent in & any other pulpit. & almost invariably to my own dissatisfaction. So I did at Roxbury. & with the usual effect upon my own mind. Should I ever try again, I should be myself in the pulpit & no doubt but that with a half an hours preparation - in the way of interesting myself in the subject. I should do it easily enough.

The necessities of my situation have made a man of war in preaching for the place in which I labour is emphatically one of the hard called. & though interesting as a field of labor it is so to no man. who does not delight in bringing out truths in opposition to avowed & practical error. Still it has made my ordinary preaching - more direct. more animated, more glowing than it otherwise would have been, for therein, I should have thrown off my trifles & though the people would have liked me the better - they would have fared the worse. ~~It has detracted from the~~

. If I am worth anything as a minister, it is as a Preacher, though I count it a pleasure & of the highest use - to maintain a pleasant & familiar intercourse with my congregation. But I know nothing of going from house to house & talking about nothing but Religion. If a man is in doubt or affliction or anxiety - I can talk with him, but I do not believe in going into every circle & in

sermonizing. & Dry nothingness

& yet do not take upon themselves the responsibility of advising in favor of this course. The question will be settled by me in a few days. Meanwhile, let me ask you - Whether the congregation of Penn St is really vacant, so that there is no prominent candidate before the people - & then, whether in case I should be released from my present engagements - I could be introduced to them for a few sabbaths - I ask the first question, because I have heard from some quarter or other, that Mr Phelps was still there & they were getting along as they could in expectation that after a few months - he would be prepared to enter into the field & assume the responsibilities of a Pastor.

I have another question to ask - & it is this - Whether I should be likely to do well for them - In order to enable you to answer this question - I will tell you as well as I can, my mode of preaching - & the way in which I have been led to adopt it.

My tendency in writing is to the reflective - the remarking - & descriptive style - Though in this - it may not be without some degree of animation & glow - yet it has always dissatisfied me in its operation on a congregation - & commenced my ministry with preaching from a brief or extended skeleton more or less extended. As I acquired more & more freedom & ease in the latter course - & was so much better pleased with the effect on the audiences - I have almost entirely laid aside written sermons - & now preach when at home from a brief - with occasionally a written discourse.

My manner of preparation - is to select my subject as early as may be - to think it over during the week - to get into order in my own mind, to become thoroughly interested in it - & then on Saturday - to arrange the order - & for execution - & so mark the times of preaching - that there might be no interruption or break in the interest of my own mind before actual utterance - In preaching - I rely upon the actual

Rev. Noah Porter,
New Milford,
July 2. 1841.

New Milford July 2. 1841.

My Dear Sir.

After the free conversation I had with you while in Boston, you will not deem it improper for me to communicate further with you upon the same subject. I found since my return, that a portion of the Committee & also of the congregation at Roxbury had their minds previously interested in one or two candidates, as likely to be such as would please them. Those interested in them, are I suppose men of influence at Roxbury & their interest is that of personal friendship & intimacy. Had I known of this circumstance, I should not have consented to preach at all for the society & did I suppose that it was known to those of the committee who proposed my name & procured my introduction to the pulpit. I should have very good reason to be offended with them. As it is, no decisive impression in my favor was made upon the congregation & none at all on those principles for others. This is all very natural & however unpleasant it may be to me to have been thus imposed on, I do not feel very much troubled by it. But having been drawn into the field of candidating without any agency of my own & for the first time I have been led to think more seriously of my situation & prospects in life & my duties to myself & my family. My friends would be very glad if I could be introduced to a field of labor, where preaching & not riding might be my business. & if I should receive a call, they would advise me to accept & rejoice in the change. I should prefer to take a dismission, without such a call. & am now agitating the question whether I ought not to do it. Those to whom I look for advice, make no objection

You will understand that I do not wish you to make any inquiry for the purpose of ascertaining my views in this matter.